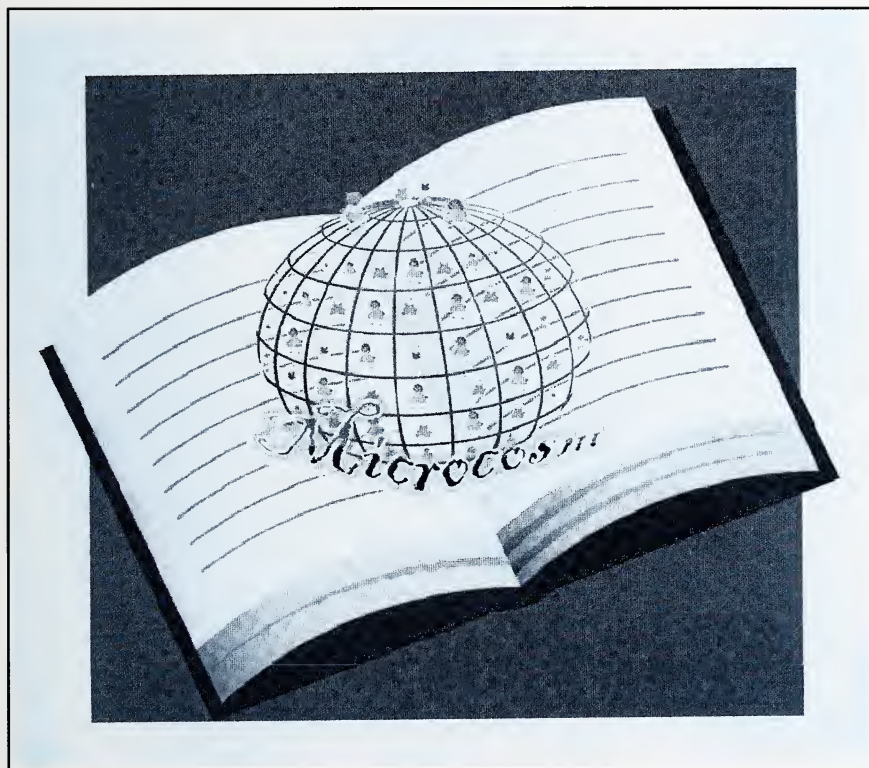


Microcosm



Spring 2009
Volume XXXVI



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Spring 2009
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Microcosm

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Volume 36

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The Case of Corbin Wallace

By Adam Z. McAlpin

Sixteen-year-old Corbin Wallace opens his eyes. He's still standing on top of one of the beams that line the skeletal structure of the old bridge, fifty feet high from the very top to the creek below. His friends are screaming at him to jump. He hesitates naturally. "Jump Corbin," they say. But he doesn't reply. He just stares at the water underneath. "You gotta jump way out! Straight down and it's shallow! Hurry up!" That doesn't make him hurry. Corbin takes in three deep breaths. One. Two. Three. He begins to push forward with his feet, but slips on the wet and mossy metal. His legs shoot from under him and his ribs catch the sharpest tip of the beam's edge. Tumbling and bleeding, he plummets fifty feet down. His friends scream but are helpless as they watch, in horror, as their friend flies head first into three feet of water. The rocks and debris cut into his skull as if puncturing a balloon. His eyes were closed.

Twenty-year-old Corbin Wallace opens his eyes. Light spills in and stings his retinas. After several hundred blinks, his vision adjusts and he is finally able to look around. He's in a hospital room. At least, he thinks that's what it appears to be anyway. It's got all the hospital accessories, yet there are pictures and drawings on the walls. Clothes and magazines line one of the corners next to some drawers. Other things are spotted about the room. But they aren't hospital in origin. They look like things just about any teenage guy would have in his room. But it's all in a hospital.

Then Corbin notices a strange oddity that reoccurs many times throughout the entire room: sticky notes. Hundreds of yellow sticky notes line the walls and furniture. Stumbling out of bed, he goes towards the nearest door. He pulls it open and sees it's just a closet. Afterwards he bothers to read the sticky on the door that says, "Closet." A bit angry and scared, he turns to the next door and tries to open it. But it's locked. He bangs on it several times but to no avail. He screams for someone to open up, but no one answers. He then turns around and heads into the bathroom.

Inside he looks at the sink and notices a blue toothbrush with the sticky note attached, and "Brushed. Night," was written on it. Similar queer things were spotted along the bathroom walls as well. While gazing at them as an astronomer would stars, he looks at where a mirror should be, but instead is terribly cracked with a bunch of clear tape holding it together. He reads the sticky note attached to the mirror, "Watch tape in VCR."

The bewildered Corbin turns around and walks towards the TV in front of his bed. He cautiously turns it on only to see static. Looking down, he notices the VCR with the sticky note taped next to the play button, "Re-wind after watching." He presses play.

Being within a few inches of the screen didn't help Corbin's nerves as the video and loud sound startles him nearly off his feet. But what creeps him out even more is the content of the video. He looks on in horror as he sees his younger self, sitting at a table, head partially shaved on one side. He's wearing a medical gown in the video and looks either angry or tired. A man's voice is heard asking young Corbin Wallace a series of questions. "What is your name," asks the man, presumed to be a doctor of sorts.

"Corbin Wallace."

"Where do you live?"

"Galvin, Tennessee."

"What are your parent's names?"

"Linda...my dad's dead. But his name was Daniel."

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen next August."

"Do you know what happened to you?"

"I fell."

"Where did you fall Corbin?"

"Off a bridge."

"Do you remember falling?"

"Yes."

"What do you remember after that?"

The young Corbin closes his eyes and thinks. Several seconds later he answers, "I don't remember."

"Alright Corbin that's-"

"What happened to me," interrupts the agitated teen.

"You had an accident."

"What?! Where's my mom?"

"Your mother isn't here Corbin-"

"Mom!?"

"Corbin, calm down-"

"Momma," exclaims the scared-to-tears young Corbin as he starts to get up from the chair. The older Corbin watches this footage and is just as scared as his video counterpart. Then the younger Corbin whips his head around to the side, revealing the shaved, highly scarred section of his head! Corbin jumps back in fright. His eyes were open.

Twenty-one year old Corbin Wallace is running when he opens his eyes. Sweat stings them as he tries to wipe his brow. He is very tired. He

wonders why he's tired. He slows down to a jog, then to a dead stop. He looks disorientated as he gazes around at his surroundings. He's in a forest and it's dusk. It is also quite cold. He shivers because he's only wearing his plain white bead scrubs. He doesn't know where he is.

He starts walking when he notices the wadded up sticky note clenched in his fist. He opens it only to read, "Keep running!" written on it. This causes fear and extreme paranoia to sweep over Corbin. He turns around to hear the faint sounds of what appears to be dogs barking. He sees flashlights in the distance. This causes him to pick up his running pace and to push it into a mad dash when he hears the yelling of men as well.

Sprinting blindly into the increasingly dark forest, Corbin becomes aware of the impending danger and slows himself down. He has been running for a good fifteen minutes by now and is weary from the immense exhaust as well. Leaning on a tree, Corbin takes many deep breaths. Suddenly, he hears something, turns around and begins to slowly back away. He is unaware of the protruding root that causes him to trip and fall down an embankment. He tumbles and flails all the way down-knocking his head against a fallen tree at the bottom. His eyes were closed—

Corbin removes his hands from over his face. He sees the faucet underneath him, running wildly. He's in a small and dingy restroom. Graffiti paints the place over and the plumbing is on the outside of the walls. He begins to feel the cold water on his hands and face. Apparently he was splashing water on himself. He doesn't remember why. He sees no napkins and wipes the excess water off via the sleeve of his jacket. He looks up from his arm and notices the mirror. He looks to be in his mid twenties. His hair is receding and his skinny frame is starting to look a bit saggy around the edges. Corbin screams in horror at this unknown man in the mirror. He backs up, still staring. But, after a while, he sees that it's only himself staring back. The face resembles his, but even more so of his father's. He approaches the mirror. He gets within inches and runs his fingers all along the curves and edges of his new face. How did this happen, he wonders aloud. He then checks his pant's pockets and pulls out keys, some paper, a pen, and seven dollars in cash. He then hears a loud knocking followed by profane shouts. Quickly, he stuffs everything in his jacket pockets, which is more convenient than putting fist fulls of stuff back in his tight pant's pockets.

Upon opening the door and stepping out, he is shoved aside by a shorter rather scraggly looking man, who slams the bathroom door behind him. Corbin looks around and appears to be in the belly of some aging diner. The two customers seated look as if they just came in to get out of the cold. He opens the door fully and steps out. Everyone in the place stares

straight at him. He starts heading out the door and hears a deep voice yell, "Hey!" Corbin turns around to see a heavy set, middle-aged black man at the grill behind the counter. "If you changed your mind about wanting the eggs that's fine, but you damn sure are still gonna pay for them," bellows the burly cook. Corbin idles for a second in front of the doorway, then turns and walks towards the man. Nervously, he approaches one of the stools at the bar and takes a seat. "What'd you do? Forget you had ordered or something?" Corbin shrugs his shoulders and the cook turns his back and continues with the eggs.

Corbin looks around at the staring individuals, then back at the counter in front of him. Minutes later he is handed his plate of eggs and a side of toast. "That'll be four-thirty-three," sighs the cook as he wipes his greasy hands off on his apron. Reaching in to his jacket pocket, he pulls out some of the paper and two dollars. Looking for the rest of his money, he reaches further into his jacket pocket and feels something unusual. Slowly, he retrieves what turns out to be a shiny, silver gun. Wide-eyed, he looks to the cook as if to ask what it is.

But the cook, backing up with his hands raised, figures this is something other than a huge mistake. Corbin is in pure shock. He hears someone scream and turns around. Upon looking back at the cook, he sees a shotgun barrel pointed straight at him. Corbin ducks as the blast goes off and he sprints, crouched low, out the door. Another shot gun blast tears through the diner's front window. Corbin sprints down half a block and turns into an alley. He huffs and puffs for air as he sits down, propped up against a dumpster. He soon realizes he's still holding the gun and violently throws it further into the alley. Corbin then begins to sob. He weeps as he curls up into a fetal position. His eyes are closed.

Corbin Wallace wakes up in a padded white room. He's not wearing a straight jacket, just some normal clothes. He puts his hands to his face to feel the scruffy thick beard he seems to have grown. Pacing around, trying to figure out these insane moments he's just experienced, he notices a camera in one of the top corners of the room. He steps towards a little, but is startled when the door suddenly opens. Two brawny men, dressed in white, as well as another, a skinnier and older man resembling a doctor walks in. They all stare at Corbin who is staring right back at them. "Hello Corbin," kindly speaks the stranger. Corbin recognizes his voice. It's that of the man from the interviews on the tape before. He speaks again, asking, "Could you follow me please?"

Timidly, Corbin starts walking along with the three gentlemen. They go down a hallway, and then turn into a room. Corbin and the doctor sit down facing each other at opposite ends of a table. "Do you know where

you are?"

"No," replies Corbin. The doctor writes some things down on a paper.

"Do you know how old you are," asks the calm, somewhat smiling doctor. Noticing the peculiarity of such a question and its relation to what he's experiencing, Corbin asks, now with hope and eagerness in his tone, "What's happening?"

"Please, just answer the question and we—"

"What's happening to me!?"

"I will...as soon as you—"

"Tell me!"

The doctor sighs and takes a second before answering, "Corbin. We will answer all of your questions after you've answered all of our questions. You can refuse, of course, but then you won't get to find out about your condition, and we'll have to escort you back to your cell. You don't want that to happen now do you?" Corbin shakes his head. "Besides," continues the doctor, "if we don't hurry this up before you have another of your 'episodes', neither of us is going to learn anything." Corbin notices the queerness of the doctor's statement, but isn't allowed to pursue it. For the doctor starts asking questions again, "How old are you Corbin?"

"I, uh...sixteen? Um, yeah, sixteen. I dunno...I—"

"Have you been experiencing frequent headaches?"

"No..."

"Muscle spasms?"

"No."

"Vision loss?"

"No..."

"Memory loss?"

"Yes," exclaims Corbin with impatient desperation in his voice.

"Uh-uh. Do you feel fine, physically?"

"Uh, yeah," answers Corbin. Thirty or so related questions later and the doctor, seemingly now satisfied, addresses Corbin, "Ok, that's pretty much it Buddy."

"Now I get to ask my questions? Right?"

"Sure...though I don't see the point really."

"What? Why?"

"Because any minute now you are going to 'zone out' as you've constantly liked to put it to me. You will...black out, faint, or even blink and you'll 'wake up' somewhere you've never been before, older, noticeably at times, with no memory of how you got there or what you've been doing. You are scared, apprehensive, and uneasy. But...for some reason, you aren't as scared. You aren't as apprehensive as you think you should be. And you

can't understand why."

"Yes...what-"

"You've told me. Many, many times. Well, you did for a while at least."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm sorry, but you really don't know how many times I've had to do this...or how many more times that I will have to."

"Do what?"

"Explain things. To you. You see, I've known you from the time you were sixteen years old. Sixteen years, seven months, and twenty...seven days. Remember the bridge? Rusty towers? You fell off and hit your head."

"Yes...I remember."

"Well, luckily you weren't killed and such, but you were hurt pretty bad. You were in critical condition and went through oh...seven, eight surgeries. And you, or part of you eventually recovered. You weren't a vegetable. You weren't in a coma. You were fine...for the first fifteen minutes. After that you didn't remember anything past falling off that bridge. This is a condition more commonly referred to as 'short term memory loss'." The doctor looks to the two burly men and motions, with a nod, for them to leave.

They do and he continues, "Of course your family was upset, but said they were going to make the best of it or whatever. Fine. Two weeks later, I get a call saying that you were acting strange, more aggressive, violent even. I had you come in and we ran some tests. And would you believe that not only do you have short-term memory loss, but you're also schizophrenic? I know! The odds are one in...hundreds of billions. That was quite the blow to the head."

"Imagine, not remembering more than fifteen-twenty minutes at a time plus, you have two personalities throughout the entire ordeal. This is the scientific find of the millennia! But, here's where it gets better: three years later and you actually tell me that you remember something. It was brief, but it was you-waking up in your room. Remember? Watching the TV before you 'blacked out'? I mean, the discoveries just don't stop with you!"

"A year after that, you escape from our facility here and are gone a whole two hours before they found you with your head gashed in. But you remembered escaping as well. This proved that the first one wasn't a fluke. But I was too impatient to wait years for another one. So I 'helped' in a sense. Electric shock therapy and solitary confinement yielded poor results. It wasn't until some time afterwards that I helped stage another one of your 'escapes'. This time I let you wander and roam around for a week

or so. I hoped this experience would be the key to unlocking your selective memory.”

“But what do you go and do? You buy a gun. It proved, even with your disabilities, you are resourceful and independent. But far too reckless.” The doctor places the shiny silver gun onto the table. “Really Corbin? A gun? What were you going to do with it? Were you really trying to rob that diner? Oh, wait! That’s right...you can’t remember.” The doctor smiles and Corbin tightens his fist, not knowing how to feel, other than angry, about all this information being laid before him. He says nothing but the doctor gets up and paces the room, still continuing to talk.

“You are special Corbin. Nobody has ever been in your shoes. You are going to be famous. But, not that it really matters to you anyway. All that does matter is that this is like discovering gold to the scientific and psychological communities. This is medical history in the making. And you and I get to be a part of it.” Through the good doctor’s ramblings Corbin realizes that the jacket and clothes he is wearing are the same ones he wore at the diner. Reaching into his pockets he pulls out the slips of papers still residing in the spots where he left them. Secretly he searches through them under the table. One stands out among the rest though. Placing it in the front of the pile, Corbin realizes that it’s the doctor’s picture. He turns it over to read the words, “Kill him” written in his own handwriting. Then something starts to change inside of Corbin. He starts getting angrier and angrier.

He looks up at the doctor, who is still talking, “I mean if it wasn’t for your cooperation in all those interviews, I don’t know where either of us would be at this point. Your first person account has given me all the information I needed. And by ‘your’ I mean yours. You, Corbin.” Corbin leans back and stares down the doctor. He continues to listen, “Your other half never disclosed any information. He...you, whoever, was always so aggressive and resentful towards me. Maybe he too remembers things. What those things are I’ll probably never know. But, no matter. Like I stated before—your account will work just fine.”

Corbin leaps to his feet, gun in hand. He points it straight at the doctor. The doctor nearly falls backwards as he catches himself on the face of the wall. “W-what are you doing Corbin,” asks the nervous, now kinder-sounding doctor. “Do you know what I do remember Doc,” poses the smirking, gun pointing Corbin. The doctor’s eyes widen. He seems to know what has happened to Corbin. “Corbin,” says the doctor. “Or whoever,” replies Corbin.

“Corbin...Corbin listen to me!”

“I remember your experiments. I remember all the needles and wires you stuck in me. I remember the dark cells you left me in. I remember what you put me through. I was never your patient. I was your ticket to fame and fortune. You used me! You never wanted to help me.”

“I-I did Corbin. I tried to help you! I swear!”

“Goodbye Doc.”

“Corbin! Corbin no!”

Corbin didn’t hesitate. He didn’t flinch. He pulled the trigger and listened to the ringing sound that followed as if it was the sweetest thing he had ever heard. The bullet hit the doctor square in the chest. It would be later determined that he died almost instantaneously. His eyes were open.

As for Corbin, he wasn’t prosecuted or tried. His “rare condition” made sure of that. Instead he was moved to another facility. There he was confined to a room where he stayed for the majority of his days. He doesn’t even remember what happened to the doctor. Well, a part of him doesn’t remember anyway...



Photo by Kellie Brady

Mitchell Louis

and the Man with One Wish

By Garrett Ashley

At night came the Wishmaster, a tall and dark skinned man by the name of Azurgath. It was somewhere in my dreams that he knelt and awaited my arrival, past the peeking mountains of my unsettling imagination, the frozen lake of unused thoughts, mud all around, and the prison of Where, a place where the characters of my emotions and imaginations dwelt in their passing, a place of forsaken thoughts and memories far more important than those that had frozen away in the waters of There. He awaited me—my name being irrelevant in any case—near the north entrance to the realm of Void, in sight of the great prison, and upon my arrival he smiled, crossed his arms, showed me his strength, but did not speak. It is me that must give thanks for the opportunity, I knew; I had dreamt of the Wishmaster before but had never been given permission to speak. “Hullo,” I would say, assuredly, the dream being lucid as though it were something real, something I might have conjured in the daylight hours of life. “Hullo, and good evening, I guess. What’s this place?”

“You know it better than me,” he said, his voice unexpectedly high in pitch and fervor. “T’was the epicenter of your imagination, long ago, before you gave heed to jealousy and impending corruption. I am Wishmaster, as you know, a character of your darkest nightmares, although you wouldn’t fear me as though I were from the Void of that particular realm. And you are here because you want something from me, is that it? A wish? One wish?”

“Something bred from fear and loathing, yes, and jealousy. I would like for someone to die, if you will, if only one person.”

“Who is this person you speak?”

“Um... well, his name is Mitchell Louis, and he’s a writer, like me.”

“What about him?”

“What about him? He gets everything he wants, left and right! Be it attention, praise, grades, success, everything... I’m tired of struggling with this competition, something I find impossible to conquer, something I’ll never be, something so degrading and emotionally binding that the thought of my success as a writer dwindles with every footstep he takes. So why not murder him? Kill off the thing that does me all this harm, when once I was happy, long ago, before I knew others like him.”

“You think that murdering an innocent writer like yourself will bring justice to your reign of unintelligible logic? You can do well in your own

realm, in your own light, and there will be some that give you praise for who you are, and others that will give Mitchell Louis praise for what he has become to be, as well."

"But he is more than a great writer; he has insulted me on many occasions. Because of Mitchell Louis, I can no longer be a part of a clique I found most suitable, what with the fact that he stole Cilia away from me, also very decent with a pen, and befriended Alexander and Sophia Weise, once my friend, now my enemy on account of Mitchell's sense of distaste for me."

"He also has distaste for you?" asked the Wishmaster.

"On account of Cilia, which was his own upbringing; nothing that could be pinned on me."

"Yes, I see. Calm down, less you awake from your dream and cannot finalize our deal."

"All right," said I, the great pen hand. "But what could you possibly accept from me?"

The Wishmaster Azurgath smiled once and twice, and said, "Make me your most favored subject at hand, on paper as you may, and I shall do this deed for you—I can't make you a great writer, but I can grant you your wish, if that is still what you want."

"Of course... you want to be a character in my stories? I can do that. I'm not sure why you would want something like that, but I can do this. My soul I give to you, then, Wishmaster, whatever you may be. Now at this crossing of ice and dirt I finalize my wish, and that wish is the death of Mitchell Louis, the enemy and the devil."

Then the Wishmaster removed himself his great cloak, revealing the marks of green leaves and roses on his dark flesh, and once he began to glow, he took out a shimmering blade from within and pointed it towards the heavens. I awoke upon hearing the crash of thunder, and the beam of light cast down through my window shades. It was something so bright and magnificent that I could no longer bear the feeling, the hopelessness of fear and dread as I knew I was awake, and then I knew that nothing I had seen or heard or said had been real. The Wishmaster was a figment of my imagination, something I had dreamt and took to note long ago—someone I figured would never come alive on paper, as truly as he should, and would never do so, not as long as I lived. The thunder continued, the lightening, the beam of light—whatever it was—until the morning came, and not once did I fall back to sleep on that uneasy night.

In the morning I awoke, dressed myself as is normal, and went out to see what had been shining through my window all of the night. Nothing was there. Maybe I had been dreaming, after all. But the ground was wet,

and upon returning to my little room I saw that my clock blared out of control, as is usual after a loss of power. Then I showered, and turned to the outside once again to walk, as was normal for any such morning. My classes were the same, the people were the same, everything was the same—until I arrived at Aerodynamics, the only class I shared with Mitchell Louis. He was late, and then he was very late, and after the dizziness of my confusion, I saw that he was unacceptably late, one hour, two hours, absent. After the agonizingly painful three hours of my class had passed, I went out as I would, and headed in the direction where I would usually see Mitchell, Cilia, Alexander and Sophia all standing about in the hallway, discussing whatever thing they may have liked. But they weren't there. None of them.

And in the passing of days I was quite uneasy with all this, their absence, my unusual happiness, at first, of course. Three days later, I opened my campus email account, mostly out of curiosity. There was a letter there from some official, the same official that always sent the same garbage again and again, but this time it was different; this time, it was special.

Visitation for Mitchell Louis is Thursday from 5:00-9:00 p.m. at Ferrywalter Funeral Home in Northbrook Hill. Services are Friday at 10:00 a.m. at Ferrywalter. Don't forget the prayer service at 2:00 p.m. tomorrow in Silas Auditorium. Please keep the Louis family in your thoughts and prayers.

Then there was a following, a bit of information regarding the recover of his three other friends, injured in an unorthodox car accident.

O, the wonders of it all, the joy, the excitement of winning this game, of my dream coming true, and then the fear of the Wishmaster, something I could not have predicted coming true. I did not think of him any more than Mitchell Louis, his demise, his end, my gain... but I couldn't get this creeping thought out of my mind, like everything was out of motion, like something was wrong, almost terrifying.

I went to his funeral, but I did not smile.

I went to see my old friends, and they did not smile, either.

Sometime after, I began to feel a bit of dread, something like I had felt before, when Mitchell Louis first showed his face in my life. It was a feeling of loss, again like before, but I couldn't place it exactly, not like I wanted to. Then I knew what it was. There was no more competition, no more enemy, no more Mitchell Louis. Everything was over, yes, my distrust in life, my unhappiness, but I had not gained a single thing. I suppose it's better to feel inferior to someone else than not having anyone at all to be better than. And so it was, I trusted an unearthly stranger with my dreams, and nevermore would I write a single line in expectation, nothing after this, my lasting letter, the end of a thread that runs parallel with the works of everyone else. Just a bunch of crap that in one day will cease to exist.

The Interruption

By Kyla Cangemi

Finally, it was night.

Dinner had gone well for Ian Andrews. The sparkling wines had flowed readily for him that evening, lending to the atmosphere of ease he had wanted to portray. He had finally snagged the girl of his dreams and was prepared to ask – but terribly nervous at the prospect of asking – a question he'd never thought he would ask. Her eyes were merry throughout the little restaurant's fine dining, especially when the long-haired waiter wandered anywhere nearby.

Ian had absolutely no idea. While she made eyes at the fluffy-haired server, he was studying the curve of her cheek, the soft blush that tinted the high points. He wanted to press kisses to her jaw line, wanted her to smile and laugh as his breath tickled the alabaster column of her neck. He lived for the moments when she glanced at him across the table, even now, when he had her right where he'd wanted her.

"May I get you anything," came the flat sentence from the waiter suddenly, whose nonchalance had turned a question into a statement so unenthusiastic that Ian would have normally noticed that the answer didn't matter. Ian was too struck by the beauty of his coquette to mutter much more than a simple utterance to the waiter. The darkly-clothed server shrugged, obviously excited and delighted to be there. Ian could not have noticed if he had been told to try. The waiter made a snide remark beneath his breath and grumbled something deep about life and jumping off a cliff before stalking away into the back to take care of other customers.

Leanne stunned him by saying after a few moments, when their plates had been half-full and their wineglasses half-empty, "Let's walk, Ian. The park?"

The waiter returned out of nowhere to throw down an outrageous bill, the only joy having been shown by the man apparent in the fake and almost lecherous smirk down at Ian. It widened when Ian spotted the tab and had to cover up his shock.

He composed himself much to the waiter's disappointment and paid promptly with an elegant little business credit card he'd earned the right to use just recently.

The park was a somber place at night. Trees lit only by fireflies and a bit of moonlight scattered through clouds stood at all angles in all directions, dotting the landscape with their quivering forms. The outlines were soft-

hued and glowing, like the edges of the short dress Leanne wore; the taffeta swayed slightly in the breeze, allowing Ian an excuse to put his arm around her.

She smiled graciously and perhaps a bit too readily, almost as if she were humoring him. Ian's ignorance led him to melt at the look she had given him. No one had ever understood him like she had. No one had ever been so lovely as she was.

"It's not cold, Ian," she said simply, continuing with him at their pace.

He could not have taken the hint; his arm tugged her closer, pinning her against his side as they ambled along the naturally-lit path. "You are so beautiful, Leanne."

That smile was only slightly icy then. His mind saw it as a lovely curve of pale, smooth lips, caused by him and lighting up her whole face.

"Leanne, I want to ask you something." He felt her seize only slightly at that and took it as excitement.

Doggedly, he pressed on. "Leanne, you know that I love you. And you know that if you ever wanted anything, I mean anything, I would give you everything I had. I know that may not be as much as what you're used to, but I..." He stopped. He couldn't let the moment slip away with his ramblings. He fumbled in his pocket for the ring.

"Leanne," he breathed, almost too low to hear, "would you marry?"

Hands took hold of Leanne. The taffeta of her dress was stretched tight over her stomach as two people picked her up bodily and staggered back into the bushes.

"Leanne!"

Ian rushed forward and threw himself into the bush, grasping for his darling and finding nothing but leaves. His frantic arms tangled in the bush before he could get through it, followed by silence and shadow in the dark park as he broke free. He was delirious at the sudden loneliness he felt in the place. "Leanne!" he cried, the sound echoing in the empty park. "Leanne!"

"Oh, stop being so Sabine, Leanne. He'll live."

The woman in dark taffeta shrugged, covering her face with an elegant hand as she rode beside the dark-haired waiter. "You are so cold, Arden. That man is heartbroken."

There was a slight sneer as the waiter ran a red light, shrugging it off and expertly wheeling them away from the park in the sleek Beamer. Then, with a cocked eyebrow and glance to her, he snorted audibly and said, at length, "And he thought he could keep you?"

A Foothold on the Facts

By Adam McAlpin

Nobody believes me. They say I'm crazy. Which, I guess is somewhat understandable. I mean, what I'm proposing, my "fanatical theories" as I have so frequently been accused of, are a bit extreme I must admit. But it's all true. I know it is. Am I so much more different than the fools with their religious beliefs? Worshiping their God's and chalking down simple coincidences as "His" will. But, forgive me, I digress. My ramblings won't sway you; only the facts are capable of such. I imagine the best place to start would be where all inconceivable stories do--at the beginning.

Until about seven months ago, I was one of the best behavioral abnormality scientists in the country. My job was to study, research, and inevitably explain all things virtually un-explainable. Nothing "paranormal" now, my work dealt with arcane facts, not asinine folklore. For God's sake, I'm a scientist. One more reason to believe me and what I am about to tell you to be the truth.

I have thirteen years experience and a considerable amount of supplementary knowledge under my belt. So I implore you to take all this into consideration before so hastily writing me off just as all the countless others have. You see, I'm considered the proverbial "Chicken Little" of the entire scientific community. Except, this time, the sky isn't falling.

Have you ever run upon a shoe in the middle of the road? Everyone has at one point or another. We make a slight veer to miss it and maybe chuckle at such a queer encounter. But that is probably the extent of things, and we give it not another thought. That is until we come across the same situation some time later. Whether it be a boot, sandal, shoe, etc., it's there again, but the typical person either ignores it or blames an animal or some hick litterer with the fault. A behavioral abnormality scientist is not a typical person.

The odds of that same situation happening, with those many reoccurrences is unfathomable. So I propose that the shoes arrive there themselves. They "walk" there! That's what they were designed for. It's not so much of a stretch if you take all the facts into consideration. The shoes act as a 'possum does when on a void of pavement with something threatening to its survival approaches. But we say "it's just a shoe." We give it less thought than when we drive up on an actual 'possum. So why is this happening?

I'm sorry to say that I am not entirely sure. My funding was pulled before my research was completed. Personally, I think that the shoes are trying to escape. They are tired of being worn around and eventually out.

They step in the most disgusting of things, smell terrible from use, and are highly under appreciated. They are “alive” in a certain sense because parts of them were once made from living things. Things we imprison and cultivate for our own use. The shoes don’t leave until we discard them. Leaving still under our possession is far too risky. They’re cousins “the socks,” however, are exceedingly more audacious. Hence as to why we lose over three pairs a year.

To where do they all go? Is there a threat from any of this? Can we be sure the shoes stay timid and controlled? These questions, as well as many more, I can not yet answer. Nor will I ever have any hopes of answering unless I get back my funding and accreditation. It is with your help that my research will continue on. Until you believe and support me, I am truly alone. Just remember that the next time you’re driving down the road and come across a shoe, will you have made the right decision? Thank you.



Photo by Kellie Brady

The Loss of the Eurydice

By Corey Faucheux

Story based on the poem, "The Loss the Eurydice," by Gerard Manly Hopkins.

"Well, Cuddiford, I don't see why this should go on any longer than it has to."

Admiral Foley sat at his desk, scribbling a few necessary notes, while intermittently glancing up towards the man sitting before him, showing that he did have the Admiral's attention.

"What exactly am I supposed to say?" Benjamin Cuddiford was a young man in his mid-twenties. As a nervous habit, he ran his hand across the side of his face, feeling the bristles he'd begun to grow out. "How's Fletcher? Have you heard anything new?"

"Eh, he's fine. Yes, fine, of course," Admiral Foley turned back to his work, his bottom lip bouncing as though trying to decide whether to speak or not. "Ah, if you would, just begin with the beginning. Oh, and stick with the business, shall we?" The Admiral looked up expectantly, ready to write whatever the man had to say.

"Right. Well, we were coming in Sunday afternoon around four, I'd say," Cuddiford began.

"Wait—wait, just one moment," Admiral Foley leaned forward in his seat, eyeing his ink bottle. He dipped his quill into it several times, "Blasted thing's empty. You'll hold on a moment, won't you, ol' chap?" He stood up and walked around his desk towards the door, then turned around. "I'll only be a moment," he said before marching down the hall.

"Well," Cuddiford said to himself, "I might as well gather my thoughts." He stroked his beard again, trying to recall what he could. "Now, how did this all go?"

It was about a quarter to four, five days ago—March the twenty-fourth—and we were coming up on the Isle of Wight. We, of the Eurydice, an old 24-gun frigate of the British navy that had been made into a stationary training ship almost twenty years ago, until just last year when it was made sea-worthy again. I was on deck to tend the lower tack. Fletcher came by for a bit of company and conversation.

"Oi, Cud. Guess how many days it is now," he said, grinning.

"What?" I'd heard him. And I knew bloody well what he was talking about. His birthday was coming up, but I wasn't in any mood to humor

him.

"You know bloody well what I'm talking about!"

I did, though.

"Six more days." He was outright beaming now, "We'll be coming in a little early, I hear. Maybe when we get to Portsmouth we ought to see if we can't get a little..." he winked and raised his eyebrows a bit, smiling devilishly.

"Blimey," says me, "the day you get a bang is the day Jesus Christ himself comes down."

"Arsehole," he said, looking put down. He turned around and went back below deck.

"Oh, belt up," I called back. I laughed a bit to myself, then looked out over the sea towards the northeast. There she was: the Isle of Wight right in front of us, and past that, home. I stared over the sea, glad to see something besides endless waves. As I looked out, I could see snow begin to fall. A little snowfall never hurt anything, but in a few short moments, it began to grow much worse.

"Take in the upper sails!" Captain Hare called out. The wind was freshening. "Come down from aloft and let go the topsail halliards." The gunner's mate and another man, Bryant, let go the mainsheet. "Set the studding sail!"

What began as a few flakes became a bothersome snow storm. The wind was picking up and began knocking the whole ship to the side. Something was off, and everyone knew it.

I caught hold of the main truss, fell, and caught hold of the weather netting and got on the ship's side. We could see her keel. She righted a little before going down, ringing the mizzen topsail out of the water. I knew Fletcher was still below deck.

"All hands for themselves!" I heard someone cry. I watched as men took off their clothes and dove into the sea. I and another, Richards, cut the foremost gripe, and then saw Captain Hare standing on the vessel's side near the quarter boat and the two doctors struggling in the water. I could see Fletcher not too far from the captain. He caught one of the life buoys and jumped overboard, along with countless others. Richards and I were some of the last to leave the ship.

She went gradually forward, the greater part of the hands being at the fore part of the ship outside. She then turned over, bringing the port cutter bottom upwards. There were still others clinging to the ship, praying to be saved. I don't know what happened to them, but I heard once that a sinking ship will pull anyone around it down with it. I couldn't imagine.

The water was freezing and snow was falling so thick I couldn't see ten meters before me. I managed to grab hold of a life buoy and a piece of the wreck and handed it off to some of the men. The life buoy I placed over my head. I was a decent swimmer, and many of my messmates knew that. They called out for assistance. I was able to help two or three at first, but at last, I found four or five men clinging to me, and I was obliged to kick them off. I could see five men in the copper punt, but it filled with water quickly. I could hear men asking, "Any signs of help?" A man near me claimed he'd seen another vessel nearby and we'd soon all be picked up. I hadn't seen anything.

"The best thing we can do is keep our spirits up," I told them.

I then saw Fletcher in the water with a cork belt and breaker. I lost sight of him not long after that because of the blooming snow. Not five minutes later, though, the snow stopped, and the sky was clear as if nothing had ever happened. I found Fletcher again, and we kept together.

"Rotten luck, eh?" he said with a smirk.

I only half-smiled back; I was already getting tired. We swam in place for an hour before we said anything else.

"The Isle's not that far off is it?" Fletcher asked me, yelling above the waves.

"Nah, but look at it. It's too rough. There'd be no way to get there in one piece." I thought for a moment about how we could get out of this mess when Fletcher shouted. I turned about and beamed. Not five kilometers off was a schooner that I had not previously noticed. The schooner bore down on us and sent a boat. A rope's end was thrown to us and we and two officers were picked up. Lieutenant Tabor was with us, along with Captain Osmond of the Royal Engineers. Neither one of them survived the trip back to shore. Out of three hundred, Fletcher and I had been the only survivors of the *Eurydice*. We looked back on the sea. The *Eurydice* was gone. Not a sign of it or anyone else was left. Fletcher and I were taken to the hospital in Ventnor for the night. That was five days ago. Fletch was still there, weak from the whole ordeal. He'd probably be there for the weekend, too. Some birthday, was the only thing I could think to say.

"I'm terribly sorry for that, ol' chap. Here we are," Admiral Foley walked into the room holding a fresh bottle of ink. "Now, as the only survivors, you know you and Fletcher are being court-martialed simply as a matter of form. Once investigations are underway, we can find whether or not anyone was to blame for this. So, if you will, I need your statement."

I closed my eyes and breathed slowly, "So, it was about a quarter to four, I guess...."

Spit Out that First Piece of Stride Gum or We'll Find You

By Jennifer Griffith

“AAAAAUUGGHH!!! The agony. Why must I go through this?”

I thought as the warm wet appendage swirled into my putty-like skin. I felt my outer covering grow tight and dry as the mouth opened wide.

“Oh! The humanity. Woe is me. The fate of Bubblelicious’s star pupil.”

I was blown into a bubble yet again. I felt my skin strain as I clung to the beast’s jaws for life. I felt my thin covering give way under the heated pressure.

“POP”

“Ow.” The mouth began digging its teeth back into me. I thought my life would have more meaning than this. I wanted to change the world. Instead I’m making this guy’s breath minty.

Just as I thought I would die, the mouth re-opened. I begged the great bubble tape in the sky to have mercy upon my Juicy Fruit soul. The sadistic creature took a deep breath. In a flood of spit and wind I hurtled miles through the air.

It appeared I was free. I was released from my oral prison. Praise be to Doublemint. Big Red tempted me with giving up hope but here I am alive.

As I fell to my knees I began to recite the twenty ingredients of Winter Fresh in prayer. When I finished, I raised my bent head to stare in joy at the sky.

There was a shadow high in the heavens. As I looked closer I realized it was descending, no, FALLING. I scrambled in terror as the giant shadow loomed just a centimeter away.

There was no time to scream. It was over. I was squished. I lay flat under the beast. From the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of ancient markings.

“ADIDAS... What does that mean?” I questioned.

The behemoth started to move forwards in giant leaps. It seemed I was along for the ride.

“Aren’t I lucky?”

As the creature took me into the golden arches I couldn’t pull my eyes away.

“Is this heaven?”

The behemoths attention was stolen by something in the distance. It

wretched my contorted body towards a maze of alien tubes. The ceiling was bursting from multi-colored tubes. Nets draped empty spaces to ensure no escape. I wondered what it was for. Unfortunately I found the answer I was seeking.

The giant leapt into a tunnel headfirst. A rough edge severed my epiglottis in a fatal blow. As I let out a flurry of words he journeyed on towards a netted cage.

The net rose like spider webs in the dawn's light. This must be some kind of horrible fighting arena I marveled.

I was correct. There were others his size and bigger hurling colorful plastic balls at each other. I shrieked as the giant flopped into the pit of no return.

I don't like this heaven at all.

A monstrous voice rattled the cage.

"Jeffrey, you come here right now young man! You have to eat your happy meal before you can play." It echoed.

The beast let out a roar and bolted into a maze of tubes. Turn after hairpin turn, we blazed through the pipes. He stopped abruptly. A steep half pipe lay ahead. The creature threw his feet forward into a sitting position and slid at break-neck speed into the bright florescent lights.

My head spun. I couldn't see straight. I was more confused than a cherry flavored blow pop. As the monster crept upon its unsuspecting meal, I felt my body begin to lose adhesion.

"I'm going to fall off!" I thought as my body left the sneaker sole and scraped onto the unforgiving Astro-turf.

Finally free I began inching away to a dark corner. Before I could catch my breath a tiny pig-tailed yellow-headed entity caught me. Its grip suffocating what life I had left out. It slowly lifted me towards its jowls.

I clinched my body tight and prepared for the worst.

"No Molly! Put that down!" I heard a voice say. Another beast ripped me away. I heard it scold the small one's actions. Finally safe I let out a sigh of relief. This hope was quickly crushed as the beast crammed me on the underside of a table. It gave a disgusted sound while wiping its claws on its pant leg. I heard it ramble away trying to scold the laughing tiny girl.

I kept my eyes closed for a long time waiting for the ringing between my ears to calm into a dull roar. I realized after a few minutes that the noise was not localized to my insanity. I opened my eyes to see a sea of color. A sea of fellow discarded bubble gum. Every flavor, brand and color only Willy Wonka could imagine. I heard a kind voice beside me, "So what's your story buddy?"

Pathway to Paradox

By Bridge Nail

It feels like I've been traveling this road forever. It's just one of those roads; everything looks the same, the pavement puts you into a trance-like state, and regardless of the speed you drive it feels as though you've gone no further in either direction. This is a familiar road – much too familiar. I must have trodden this path more than any other in my life and it's starting to get old.

There it is: the rotten tree that should've been taken care of years ago. I feel sorry for the people who live around here when that thing falls on the power line. Of course, I've been saying that for as long as I can remember, and from the looks of it nobody has lived around these parts for quite some time. At least, not in a modern and civilized manner that is.

I hate this road. Sure, there are other routes I could take, but with gas prices the way they are I'll just stick to this course. Never mind the fact that no one has bothered to repair these damn potholes, or that the roads winds worse than a...

What the hell was that?

Oh, man. It's taking me awhile to regain my composure. Here I am, a grown man, driving down the road and almost wreck because of a little old boot in the road. I swear, I don't know if it's because it's late and the moon isn't even out, but I just knew I'd seen a body in the middle of the street. I'm glad nobody else is with me because they would never let me live this down. To be honest, I couldn't blame them. I'm laughing so hard at myself I could almost wet my pants...

Whoa, Déjà vu.

Well, who doesn't get Déjà vu every now and then? Everybody knows it all has to do with the separate hemispheres of our brains. So, if this all seems familiar it's probably because I just scared the crap out of myself and sent my mind into...

Wait, Déjà vu of Déjà vu?

Just what is going on here? I've never felt anything like that before, but...

Yes I have.

Officially getting freaked out now: a body that turns into a boot, a much too familiar situation, and I feel like every single thing has either already happened or is happening right now.

Oh, now this is about as cliché as it gets – the car won't start. You've

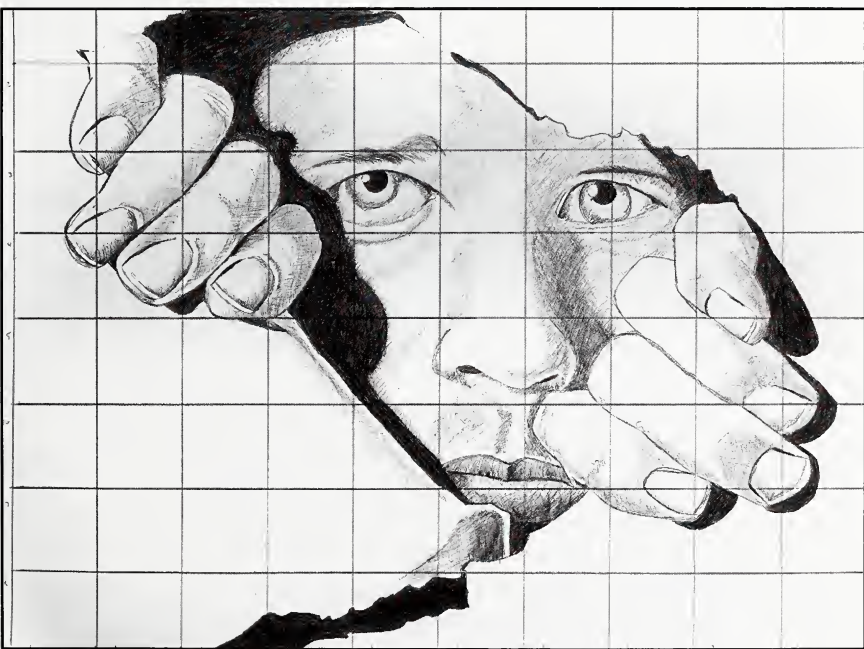
got to love the irony of feeling like you're stuck in a B horror flick. And, to top it all off, I can't get that stupid boot out of my mind. Just what I need, a superstitious distraction while I try to diagnose car troubles in the proverbial pitch black.

Actually, that looks like a pretty nice boot.

Of course it is. It's a Redwing just like – no way, not happening. This is not my boot. See, if you look at the inside of mine you'll...

I remember this. I was looking inside my boot just before...

It feels like I've been traveling this road forever.



Illustrated by P.J. McCray

The Not-So-Secret Adventures of Mr. Griffith

By Corey Faucheux

It was Thursday night in the at-the-time, not-so-sunny Malibu village. But then again, it may have been Wednesday morning, depending on which time zone you live in. Actually, for all I know about time zones, it could be Friday afternoon in the 22nd century. But irregardless of your time-keeping preference, it just so happened to be around 10:00 p. m. in our little corner of the world: “Mr. Griffith’s Stunning Private Detective Agency,” 123 Sumthen Street, which is right next door to Ol’ Sam’s Drug Store, which is right next door to that old movie rental place that I hardly ever go to, so I can’t remember the name of it right now, which happens to be right on the corner of Oruther St.” But that’s the only geography lesson I’ll give you tonight. And while we advertise a twenty-four hour answering service, we tend to call it a day right about now, mostly because no one ever calls at night. No one ever seems to call at day, either, for that matter, but we try not to think about that.

Oh, excuse me. I suppose I’ve yet to introduce myself. Dawson, family name. Stephen Dawson. Stephen Dwayne Dawson VIII is what they’ve got on my birth certificate. You must be thinking, “How does a man with a name like Stephen Dwayne Dawson VIII start a private detective agency under the name ‘Mr. Griffith?’” The answer is he doesn’t. He can’t. It would take a man with a name like “Mr. Griffith” to start a private detective agency under the name “Mr. Griffith.” Luckily, we just so happen to have one of those here in Malibu. It’s funny how things like that work out, isn’t it? What really sets him apart are his incredible skills of deduction and his care-free, happy-go-lucky, yet regrettably absent-minded personality. It’s difficult to describe him in words, so I won’t. I’m afraid you’ll just have to meet him in person. Luckily for myself, I have that privilege every day. You see, I work for Mr. Griffith and his stunning detective agency. I’m the assistant to the “high-and-dry private eye.” Why he’s called that, I’ll never understand. I suppose it was the only thing he could come up with that would rhyme, because Mr. Griffith knows from his three and a half years in marketing that the public loves rhymes.

I was sitting at my short desk. The thing is so low to the floor that I can’t sit down without cutting off the circulation to my legs. I’ve spoken to Mr. Griffith about it on several occasions, and each time I get the same response, “I’ll get around to it.” I was tidying up a bit, as I do each night

before going home. My chair was lumpy as ever. When we started this little shindig, Mr. Griffith was just a tad overly-enthusiastic while filling out the order forms for crates of business cards, and somehow he managed to write "11" in the "quantity" section instead of "1", as we had originally agreed upon. He swears it was an honest mistake, and I understand; these things happen. However, I was a little concerned when he decided the next day to change the name from "Mr. Griffith's Remarkable Private Investigation Service" to the current one. He argued that we could write over all the cards in pen. I told him it wouldn't look professional. Always one to look at the bright side, he said, "Now we don't have to worry about buying chairs!" and he sat down in his La-Z-Boy recliner.

"Mr. Griffith," I began, "I really wish we would get a taller desk, or at least some real chairs..."

"I'll get around to it," he replied.

I should know better. Maybe one day he will. Anyway, it was about that time: time to go after a long day of not doing anything at all. I was eager to get home and shave my sideburns.

That's when she walked in.

She was tall, I guess. Kind of. More average, I guess, now that I think about it. Yes, average. But she was at least a seven. I don't exactly know what that means, but I've heard it said so many times that I think I'm using the term correctly. Irregardless, she had semi-long, semi-straight, semi-blond hair. It made you think her hair was long, but it didn't exactly reach down to her shoulders. Nope. Just didn't quite make it. I suppose it just gave up on the last stretch. It seemed straight, but when you really looked at it, it had more of a wave than anything else, I guess. And the color, while it would be considered blonde, the roots were visibly red—dark red, in fact. I suppose she'll have to fix that up some time soon. All in all, it was just lazy hair, that's what it was. Lazy hair. But I'm no good with descriptions, so you'll just have to go see her for yourself one day.

Where was I? Oh, right.

That's when she walked in. I stood up, as any gentleman would, and so did Mr. Griffith. However, while I'm sure I had a charming, self-composed countenance, Mr. Griffith's face sported a look of shock and amaze.

"Dawson!" He said in a sharp whisper, "I thought we had the door locked!"

He had a point.

"I thought so, too, sir," I replied under my breath. I did think so, too. I had personally propped the chair up against the doorknob when Mr. Griffith asked me to lock the door an hour earlier. The actual locks had broken last year. I looked behind the door and saw that the business cards boxes

had indeed been knocked over.

"I'm sorry to come in so late without an appointment, sir," she said, visibly nervous, "but you do advertise a twenty-four hour answering service."

"Yes, Mr. Griffith said, "yes, we do say that, don't we? But I had sort of assumed that it was understood that it was referring to the phone."

"Oh, well, I tried to call, but I didn't know what your number was..." she said.

"Well, that's what our business cards are for!" he replied.

"Yes," she started, "but you see, I couldn't find your number on the card..."

When he was ordering the business cards, Mr. Griffith incorrectly assumed it would be a waste of money to put all the digits for the office number on the cards, so he ignored that section altogether.

"Well, why didn't you just use the phone book?"

"I... Well... I did, but..." she said, her head drooping.

Mr. Griffith, in a fit of unfounded paranoia, chose to leave our office number unlisted.

"Yeah, yeah," Mr. Griffith said, "so what exactly do you need?"

"Well, you see," she began, "My name is Jessica O'Mabry, and I'm here to report some... suspicious activity that I've noticed."

Griffith replied, "You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to an attorney—"

"I didn't do anything!" Miss O'Mabry took a step back and turned toward the door. "Good Lord... I can see I've come to the wrong place. Er... It was nice meeting you, Mr. Griffith." She looked over and nodded at me, "Good night, both of you." She stepped outside and pulled the door just to, which is another way of saying "almost closed all the way, but lacking the physical desire to finish the job."

"Now, just wait a minute!" Mr. Griffith called out, "You came to me looking for help, and that just happens to be the kind of thing I'm good at. Please. What is it you wanted to say? Since you're here, I mean."

For a moment nothing happened, then Miss O'Mabry slowly pushed the door open and ducked her head in, "Oh," she said with an almost-convincing fake smile, "It was nothing, really. My mistake." She closed the door again.

"Hang on, there!" Mr. Griffith jumped up and ran around his desk to the door. As he raised his hand to turn the door knob, he was surprised to see it come towards him, instead. So surprised, that the mere shock

was enough to give him a bruise on his forehead and knock him back a step. Well, it was either the shock, or Miss O'Mabry had swung the door open without looking, which, by the way, is a terrible habit which everyone should try to quit immediately. I'll assume it was the latter because, rather than hear Mr. Griffith yell, "Dawson, did that door just attack me!?" I heard him yell several other things that I won't repeat. While Miss O'Mabry yelled back, "I SAID GOODNIGHT!" and promptly slammed the door. It didn't really matter that the door had been slammed, because it only came "just to." The door simply isn't quite lined up right, or whatever it was Mr. Griffith had said. We really need to fix this place up some time.

I could hear Miss O'Mabry run down the hallway and out the door. I decided it wouldn't be practical to stop her. Instead, I went to fetch an ice pack for the aforementioned bruise developing on my poor boss's head. This may come as a surprise, but we didn't hear from her the next day. Or the next day. Or the day after that, or the day after that... In fact, it would be several day-after-that's before either of us would think about her again.



Illustration by Daniel Friis

The Jester

By Adam Z. McAlpin

Cruel times were the dark ages. Closed-minded paranoia and the fear of black magic. Plagues ravaged villages. These years were quite tragic.

T'was the time of kings. It was the age of a monarch's order. The weak lost their kingdom and the ravenous expanded their border.

The average crowned heads that ruled had the typical castle and such with no problems to fester. They had the bravest of knights, the fairest of maidens, and there's always a jester.

Which brings me to my story. One that is rarely told. About a malicious king who had a jester so bold.

Once there was an evil king who fed his subjects to lions starved thin. For anger or just boredom, the citizens were devoured right in front of him.

And this king also had a jester. A funny man named Pool. Who had been an animal trainer in his youth, and always wore costumes of wool.

Pool had been at the castle ever since the death of the last funny bloke. Who was fed to the lions after making a bad joke.

The king would bellow obscenities and abuse poor Pool. He'd threaten his weary jester, yelling, "Juggle more fool!"

Pool realized early that his jokes would not last. He had only so many good ones but was running out fast.

Sure there was magic and juggling. But something could happen and he could make a mistake. And that's too big a risk for him, with so much at stake.

But one day a fair maiden, out of boredom from the king, was thrown to the lions because she could not sing.

That was the last straw. Pool could not endure anymore. He was tired of the violence and sick of the gore.

He told the king some jokes that mocked his sire. At any other kingdom, at the least he'd been fired.

But here the consequences were far, far more grim. The lions were coming for his blood this time. This time the lions were coming for him.

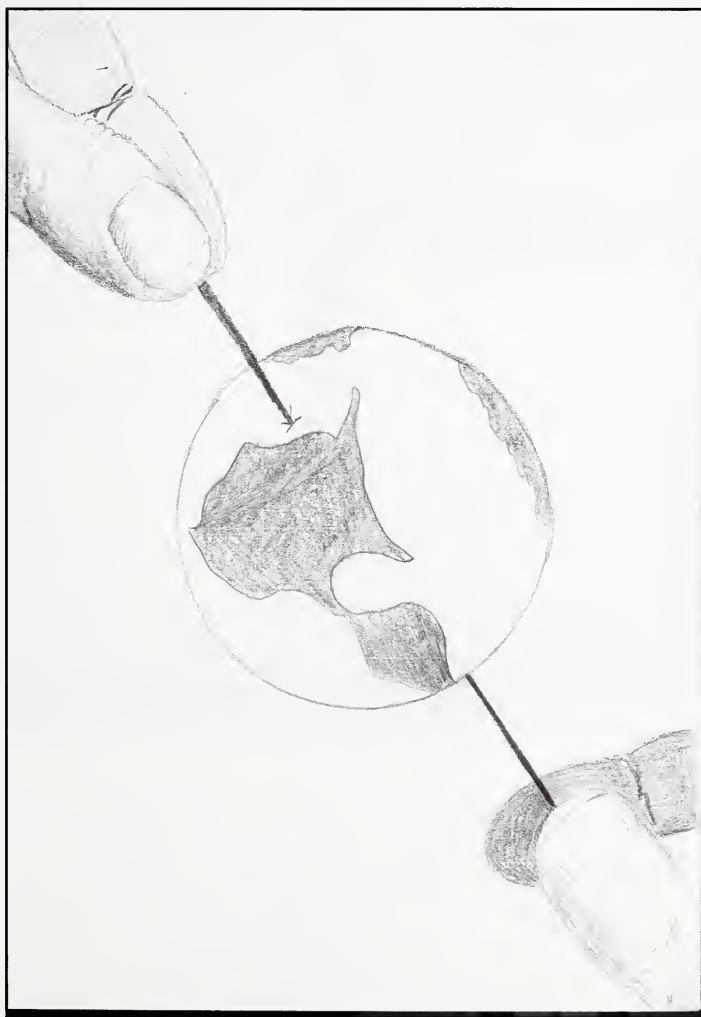
Yet Pool didn't run, didn't flinch, nor did he cry. He smiled as he looked his king straight in the eye. Angered, the king yelled, "Insolent whelp, prepare to die!"

But die he did not. The lions snuggled next to Pool as if they were mere cats. The astonished king did not know the details nor the irony of the facts.

For you see, I mentioned Pool trained animals. Lions to be precise. These he knew and to him they were as harmless as mice.

But the beasts were still hungry. They turned toward the king who, unlike his guards, was too afraid to flee. The last thing anyone heard him say was, "Help! Please help me!"

Before the lions started their feast, they let by their master Pool. He knelt down and whispered to the doomed ex-king, "Now who's the fool?"



Illustrated by P.J. McCray

Essays



Illustrated by Jaime Bengé

Change

By Shauntisia Kees

Many years children like myself and our parents have searched for someone to call our hero, since the days of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman and many others. On the night of November 4, 2008, that person was found; his name is Barack Obama. Because he represents the change that our nation needs, we will begin to look up to and respect this long-awaited gentleman.

As a prime example of great courage, Obama allowed himself to be a voice for African Americans among other races to alert the world on the areas where change is terribly needed. That election night will forever be remembered in the history of this great nation, not because a black was voted president, but because he is going to bring well-deserved change and jobs for all Americans.

The road to this election was long and hard for both Barack Obama and John McCain. Although both candidates had well-managed campaigns, Obama's plan to provide "change" is what people of this country have been striving for. Some voters still feel as though an African American president is nonsense, but those who really look deeply are glad to have voted for a man that has been through the struggle that most of us are feeling now. For this reason, I feel that he is more than ready to provide the "change" that his entire campaign is built around.

Being able to witness this historic moment in my generation's lifetime is a wonderful honor not just for blacks but for Asians, and Hispanics as well, that were more than half the percentage that turned out to vote. With this election turning out the way it did, it shows all Americans that anything is possible and that when we set our minds to achieve something, we should hold on to that dream, regardless.

I look at Obama as being a symbol of heroism because I believe and have the faith that he will lead this country in the direction it should have been going, and that is forward. But until we are able to accept each other as one, this country will continue to be divided among race, gender, and religion. The one quote that I remember hearing so many times growing up is one to use now, "Together we stand, but divided we will fall." The biggest challenge that Obama is going to face is getting the McCain voters to believe and trust in the America he is trying to build.

One of the McCain voters stated that he was not going to vote for Obama because he felt that Obama wanted to "take from the rich and give

to the poor,” like he was Robin Hood or something. When I think about it, that scenario would not be a bad one because some poor families could really use the money that the rich are just throwing away on unnecessary things.

If President Obama were to read this essay, he would probably say that he should not be considered a hero because it is we who made him what he was declared on the night of November 4, 2008, in his hometown of Chicago, Illinois. His acts of bravery and courage are what inspired the young voters, like myself, to get out and use the voice many fought for us to have many years ago. Thank you, President Obama!



Photo by Kellie Brady

Transcendental Stream

By Evette Williams

The river has always been here in Natchez, Mississippi, separating our state from Louisiana. Even as a little girl I've always been fascinated—and a little scared—of it. Perhaps it's because I've always been drawn to water that I like to see it as much as possible or maybe it's because I've never gotten to see an ocean up close so this is the only large body of water that I am able to appreciate. Usually my family takes the chance to see the river as much as possible.

This time it wasn't my actual family that I'm connected to by DNA that got out of a mid-sized red car on the bluff. Other than my sister, Victoria, my family of friends included Kandice—who was driving—and Brittany. Kandice borrowed the car from her mother and, as usual, she popped in unexpected and demanded that we go do something interesting even though it was probably ninety degrees outside. She also wanted us to be together a little more this summer before we all started college. Before we made it to the river we went about doing other things, saving the best spot for last.

The sun was setting as I stepped out of the car; the sky was stained with dim purples, yellows, and blues. Snatches of clouds hovered across the horizon and above the single white gazebo that sat proud against the backdrop of our twin Mississippi River bridges and the river itself. I walked ahead, holding the small hand of Brittany's five-year-old brother that had to come along with us. It was the only way that Brittany could leave the house since her parents forced her to baby-sit once again. We didn't mind him though, Eric's presence reminded me of the point of view of a child—even if he could get annoying when he didn't get his way.

"Let's take pictures." Brittany swung her trusty silver digital camera around, the remaining sunlight bouncing off of it and creating a glare.

We all agreed, of course; she loved taking pictures and we all loved creating memories. We marched up the baby blue steps of the gazebo. Several dynamic poses later the sun had set and Brittany's camera wasn't the best in dark light. We all turned our eyes to the river that had been waiting patiently for our attention.

"So beautiful." My sister said exactly what I was thinking.

With its daring strength and glittering beauty as the lights of Vidalia and that of the bridge hit its inky black surface, the river was easily the best thing about the area Under the Hill and on the Bluff. Whether it was

viewed from the highest point—the Gazebo—or a bit lower near the black fences that blocked people from falling off of the rocky cliffs, it was definitely always something worthy of a picture. Even as we stood, I could hear Brittany snapping photos even if they wouldn't come out exactly as how her eyes saw them.

“How can something so beautiful be so deadly?” Kandice shrugged, leaning over the rails of the Gazebo, probably remembering how the river had been rising lately and threatening a bit of a flood.

“Irony isn't it.” I gave her a wry look before leaving the Gazebo and heading for the fenced area.

Approaching it gave me the illusion that there was nothing to stop me from falling into the rushing current of the river and being swept under the floating casino a few miles down and beneath the river and probably ending up in New Orleans or the Gulf of Mexico. My gaze shifted upward once I reached the fence and wrapped my hands around it. Ignoring the weird feeling of being so close to the edge, I admired the stars. They winked mischievously back at me, almost daring someone to try to reach them against the black canvas of the sky. Below the horizon sat the city of Vidalia, which was much more vulnerable to the deceiving body of water that it flirted with every day. From here it seemed like a distant land, with its glow and shadowy shapes of buildings in the background. Even further to the left was a higher cliff, and on it sat the silhouette of a large house that I'd never been in even though it sat on my side of the river.

The wind caressed my bare arms and ran its spindly fingers through my hair, causing me to drop my gaze to the Mississippi below. The river wanted my attention again. If I strained my ears I could hear the rushing currents licking the rocky shore below as it disappeared into its depths. To the right was the area that made me feel an urge for adventure, to maybe jump into one of the barges sliding down the water and travel up to another state. With cliffs on both sides and fog obscuring the view, all that could be seen was eternal water as it disappeared around a corner and almost dared anyone looking to follow it.

Finally, I looked away, back to my friends, sister, and Eric on the gazebo only to see that they weren't up there anymore. They were all standing beside me, looking in the same direction as I'd been only a few moments ago, their eyes glowing from the same interest that I had. Maybe that's what's so great and nostalgic about the river. Not that it's beautiful, or dangerous, or a favorite tourist trap but that it signifies a road not taken yet.

As we left, I took another look at the curled petals of magnolias resting in a tree and knew that no matter how boring I think Natchez is, or how I know that my dreams are going to take me elsewhere, I would always come back here even when I won't have to.

Plays



Photo by Kellie Brady

Chat Room

By Jennifer Griffith

CHARACTERS:

Mr. Right

Skater

GothGurl

OLO

Jok3r

Moderator

PartyGirl

The genders can go either way on some of the characters. OLO, Jok3r, and the Moderator can be either male or female. When the speaking parts are not directed at characters, they should freeze in one position. This makes the action stop so the other scenes have more impact. When the action is directed a character's way, he or she should pretend to type, play with a mouse, play with nails, hair, stretch, yawn, etc. All characters are seated with heads bowed as the curtains open.

Mr. Right: (raises head) MR. RIGHT HAS SIGNED IN.

GothGurl: (raises head) GOTH GIRL HAS ENTERED CHAT ROOM.

Jok3r: (raises head) JOKER HAS ENTERED THE BUILDING!

Party Girl: (raises head) PARTY GIRL HAS ENTERED CHAT.

Skater: (raises head) SKATER HAS ENTERED THE ROOM.

OLO: (raises head) OLO!

Jok3r: Hey what's up?

GothGurl: Hey not much

Mr. Right: So what's your ASL?

GothGurl: What's an ASL?

Jok3r: it means Age Sex Location; I'm a 16 year old guy from Florida

GothGurl: okay, I'm 17. A girl. From the middle-of- Nowhere-USA.

Jok3r: OMG LOL!

GothGurl: (gives a confused shrug)

Jok3r: OH MY GOSH LAUGH OUT LOUD

GothGurl: (laughs) de de dee! (Shrugs shoulders large expression.)

(Focus goes to party girl and skater.)

PartyGirl: Hey there sweetie! I missed you!!

Skater: Hey! Sorry my mom won't let me stay up late on weeknights!!

PartyGirl: I know right! My mom is the same.

Skater: I couldn't quit thinking about you all day!

PartyGirl: really? Me either! I kept thinking how cool it would be to run into you like at the mall or something!

Skater: Really? That would be great! Why don't we?

PartyGirl: You mean really meet? For real?

Skater: Yeah! I want to meet you IRL!

PartyGirl: You mean in real life?!

(Focus shifts to OLO who has been quiet for the most part.)

OLO: O1O1O1O1!! OOO1OO1OO1!!! (Keeps O1O1 when other characters are not speaking.)

PartyGirl: who is that guy!? (Covers ears.)

Jok3r: Some one shut him up!

Skater: It happens everyday, just hit ignore and it will block him.

(Everyone makes an obvious tapping motion with hand. O1o makes no noise but acts as if he is still yelling.)

PartyGirl: Ah silence. Best invention since sliced ham! BRB. Be right back.
(She bows head.)

Skater: (Sits idle.)

Jok3r: So GothGurl r u all new to this?

GothGurl: yeah I wanted somewhere to just talk. No one understands me at school and home. Everyone thinks I'm someone else and stereotypes me. I want a place where I can just be myself. (During entire monologue she gets up and does fake cheerleader moves with pom poms.)

Jok3r: You're right. I can tell there is more to you. You're not just a stereotypical teenager. You're the definition of it.

PartyGirl: (She raises head.) Hey I'm back.

Skater: Look I want to talk to you a second. How long have we talked on this Chat Room? It's been nearly a year and I really care about you. I haven't been honest with you and I want everything to be out in the open.

PartyGirl: (She looks confused.) Okay?

Skater: First off I'm not 19 and I don't even live in California. I'm 32 and I live in Texas.

PartyGirl: Really? I've kept some things from you too. I'm not 17 I'm really 30.

Skater: Wow. You aren't head cheerleader then?

PartyGirl: Not since 92!!

Mr.Right: So GothGurl, do you have a boyfriend?

GothGurl: No...

Mr.Right: Do you have a picture I can see?

GothGurl: Why? (Confused.)

Mr. Right: Because I wanna see if you're as cute as you sound. So what are you wearing?

GothGurl: Clothes. (Uncomfortable.)

Mr. Right: You're funny. I like that. So do you wanna look at my web cam? (Whistle blows, referee clad man comes charging on stage, points to Mr. Right and gives him the YOUR OUTTA HERE signal.)

Mr. Right: (He is obviously angry, throws fists.) @#&!! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG! %\$#@!!! YOU CAN'T KEEP ME OUT OF HERE!! I'LL BE BACK!! *&%@!

(They exit the stage.)

GothGurl: What just happened?

Jok3r: That's called a Moderator. If you're a lecher like that they throw you out.

GothGurl: (She nods in understanding,) so what do all those @#&% things mean—

Jok3r: (He cuts her off mid-sentence,) those are the things to say if you enjoy the taste of Lever 2000 in the morning.
(GothGurl gives confused look.)

OLO: (Lifts head starts screaming,) O1O1O1O1O1111OOO1O1O!!
(Everyone gives large sigh.)

OLO: (Continues with his OLO, Mod comes back in and picks him up, takes him off stage left.)

Jok3r: Hey GothGurl can I add you to my friends? You're pretty cool.

GothGurl: (She is obviously excited.) SURE!

Skater: I'm sorry I lied to you; I really wanted someone to talk to though. I just went through a really bad divorce.

PartyGirl: You've been married too?! What else have you kept from me!

Skater: That's it I swear! I'm sorry I used you for support.

PartyGirl: That's okay... I guess I used you too. I'm a divorcee too. I caught him cheating on me and I couldn't handle it.

Skater: My wife Cheated on me too. The new guy at work... enough said.

PartyGirl: My husband loved the internet more than he ever loved me.

Skater: Touché. I just wish we could have stayed together for our kids.

PartyGirl: (Nods) How many did you two have together?

Skater: Just two, a boy and a girl. Little Diana is the image of her mother.

(Laughs)

PartyGirl: (Thinking) would your son happen to be named Jason?

Skater: Yeah... he is... how did you know that? (Almost panicking)

(There is silence for a moment.)

Skater: PartyGurl? You there? HELLO?

PartyGirl: Sam? Is that you? (She says this slowly.)

Skater: Oh My God. Janice... (Shocked, he turns to her.)

(OLO comes back onto stage, stands looking confused.)

OLO: O1O? (Shrugs shoulders)

(Curtains close with jok3r and GothGurl smiling to each other, Skater and PartyGirl staring shocked at each other.)

Poetry



Illustration by Heather Case

The Cranes of Rain

By Kyla Cangemi

A soft hush falls
The woods, now silent, are heavy with waiting
Something in the air is hanging, fluttering
Touching down with gentle sound
Beating a gentle rhythm on the leaves and limbs below
Like a thousand snow-white cranes
Floating daintily to the ground
To perch on sunken logs
Or sink in newly-mixed mud
Their damp wings cling to their round bellies,
Pregnant and gliding to nesting grounds
That spot the dirt at odd intervals
Their children only appearing far later
When sprouts and stalks of baby birds
Poke out in earnest from the shell of the earth.

See No Evil

By Adam Z. McAlpin

Are you scared of the dark? Well that's all I have.
We all are lost when we lose the path.
And how silly we look
with our arms stretched forward and our heads held high.
How scared we feel like baby birds
when they first learn to fly.
We must learn quickly or else we fail.
We fall. Many times do we fall.
But we are just newborns struggling no longer to crawl.
Am I suffering? Is this my blight?
Is it I who suffers or is it those who have sight?
To see no affliction or pain.
To just sit and listen to the sound of the rain.
I'm unique. I'm special.
I'm no oversight of God's.
I have the satisfaction of knowing I conquered this crisis,
against all odds.
You may call it "disabled,"
but I call it peace of mind.
Vision is a gift, not a necessity.
I'm happy I'm blind.

Lost Lament

By Bridge Nail

Even as a child I've seen things differently.
Seen things for what they are and not just what they say.
Free your mind, keep to the soul, and nothing they can sell you
will amount to Streets of Gold.

It's not far until I've broken down again,
and everything I see becomes a personal sin.

I'm selling out into depressive doubt,
as all my sins come back to me again.
It's called a lie, I've seen right through them all:
No one's going to love me in the end.

I guess in all my trials I've failed you miserably,
and if I gave my life for keeping yours,
I think I'd keep it for myself.
One more time alone with me and ye shall see time's killing me.
No one cared to save my soul, so this life from all I stole.
Amen.

I know what was became, and from that moment on
what became was. Why? Just because.
That which were grew and stretched out,
reached and branched forth into eternity.

'76

By Jennifer Griffith

A window shows me a glimpse of the world outside.
The child who places his lips to the glass.
The same adult who stares out in wonder.
Look outside. That's not thunder.
He's watching. He's waiting.
Step out of line and he'll come get you.
The propaganda, the lights, the sirens.
The cameras.
A prison with no bars.
A hell with no guardian.
This place died in '76.
Where were you?
The cameras are watching.
As they watch--lights fade they scan the dark for mischief.
18, 19, 20? Doesn't matter.
No one is an adult unless you've graduated.
Then you're ready for Pull-Ups and Flintstone vitamins.
This place died in '76
Where were you?
They always said no one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
They stole freedom, expression, even human rights.
They made you a child.
What's left to take?
This place died in '76
Where were you?

No Expectations

By Bridge Nail

How pathetic it doth seem to separate the seed –
to hunger for society's affection-feeding greed.
I sobbed the rivers deep & somehow never thought to drown.
I'm living in the now, nothing brings me down.
Is emptiness my only strength, with hatred to the core?
Or perhaps there's someone else inside. Could there be something more?
I was given not a choice but sucked into its grip –
Intimidatingly downstream, for Life is But a Trip.
You've given me the reason to live to see all pay –
to prove eternal youth and I'll Never Fade Away.
I've seen proof of my displacement and the consequential flow,
but I rose above the test, and rest easy tomorrow.
I'm putting forth my effort just to see the light of day,
to focus on the good in life, and strive for what is right.
Finding comfort in the darkest place of hollowness unknown,
Showing a flash of insight and deserving a moonless night.
A foe, this torment in reform, another storm of good intent.
There's comfort in depression and happiness when I'm sad.
All the adults have started dealing out juvenile delinquency.
So Apocalypse hath called the boy, and now it's time to preach.

A Morning Macchiato

By Kyla Cangemi

Vacuum seal broken
And the odor-assault on sense after sense
Ensues.
Dirty-rimmed pot swirls
Dark, frothy, hungry,
Bitter.
Sluice of juices, nectar of mine;
Wishing to wake further after waking,
Take a good sniff of what you'll be taking,
Watching the IV of late-night essays and
Grad students
Drip, drip
Down from a flimsy, porous cup.
Seize it up.
Sloshing over tongue, burning
Sweetly singeing,
Taste buds under not-so-delicate assault
Then the slow, hazelnut-touched gulp
That comes when one understands.

Food of Hope

By Shauntisia Kees

Raisin Bran
Capt. Crunch
Have you ever had cereal for lunch?

Red
Green apples
Wonder how they would taste as truffles.

Blackburn
Sugar cane syrup
Both go great on pancakes, Yup!

Faith
Hope
Never give up on God and turn to dope!

Aaargh!

By Courtney Carter

The water throws us to and fro
Where it leads I do not know
Back and forth, side to side!
We roll with the midnight tide
Easy on the rigging, Spud!
Come on Green, you steer like mud!
We toss and sway into the night
To man this crew is quite a fright
As the pirate captain of this crew
I tell you I need a roster new
Why did I set sail with such a bunch?
I shoulda had a better hunch.
I do not have pirates of anger
Nor do I have pirates of greed
See my pirates are much stranger
My pirates are of a different seed
My pirates don't do any work
They don't know how to steer
To hire them I was such a dork,
My thoughts were led by beer
Tomato, potato, whatever you may like,
Will never be able to steer a ship at night
Rigging won't be touched by carrot nor by pea
I guess that's what I get
For taking a vegetable crew to sea.

Roommates on Gaia

By Jennifer Griffith

Us
On couch
With no pants
Being us
Mouse click
Nom Nom Nom!
Gaia

Tacks
Lint Ball
Tuna can gone
Fatal error
Escape. Escape.
Click click click click
Bid!

Ha!
Attack!
Kidney Stab
I am Zombie
Nom! Nom!
Click click click click
Attack!

Click!
Must Have!
Daily Chance!
Green Dragonfly?!
No Ink?!
Click! Catch! Click! Catch!
Quest!

Icebox Classroom

By Marian L. Brown

Twelve o'clock noon, twice a week we meet.
Same time, same place, same cold room.
Lights are out, door is open, so I enter.
The room seems bare, feels like a mortuary.
Shivering and shaking in my desk, uncomfortably.
Hands feel like icicles and feet like cubes of ice.
Reaching for my pen and my journal, I began to write.
Feeling chilly, a little vapor releases from my mouth.
Ashamed at my thoughts, a few curse words pop out.
The temperature must be a least sixty.
Moved my desk and grabbed my jacket.
Can't seem to get away from those blasted vents.
Ms. Silverii darts through the door.
Moving swiftly across the floor.
No key for the control, no fault of hers. It's so damn cold.
I breathe deeply and focus on a nice warm place.
Until the next time, I enter the icebox classroom.

The Other Side of the Radio

By Darren White

As you drive home from work
Listening to your music
On the other side of the radio
I am in a room
That in the summer is hot
And in the winter is hot
As the song ends, you hear me say
“That was Alan Jackson,
Next up is “The Cowboy In Me””
On the other side of the radio
I am giggling like a little girl
Because I can’t help but laugh
Whenever I say “The Cowboy In Me”
As you listen to your Friday night football games
I am on the other side of the radio
Playing online bingo for hours
And getting paid for it
Telling children in chat rooms
That Miley Cyrus is dead
and getting paid for it
I once thought radio was dead
But since being hired
I have realized that radio is dead
But I will never be able to listen
Without wondering what
Is on the other side of the radio.

Excalibur, No. 2

By Corey Faucheux

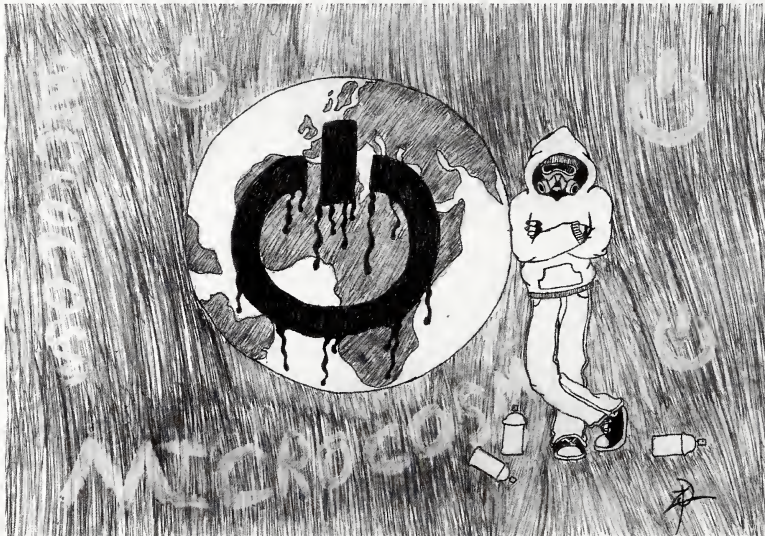
“That pencil he wields so effortlessly
Is the epitomy of ergonomic design.
A utensil of half the quality
Couldn’t be found in your own lifetime
His works must have improved ten-fold
Upon his initial utilization
And each day they may have grown exponentially
Though, I’m no good at multiplication.
When all his assignments are completed
He places it within his shirt pocket
But if I were to hide a tool so stunning
I’d keep it in my chest, then lock it.
In fact, I know just what I’ll do...
During class I’ll start an awful racket
And as the commotion continues to stir
I’ll find the blessed pencil and jack it.”
I grin to myself so evilly
For this scheme I am surely proud
I look and see my friends staring at me
“Oh \$@!#, did I say that out loud!?”

Joe Black

By Adam Z. McAlpin

Do you know Joe Black? Is your best friend a shadow?
Who all knows him? Just the rich and the dead.
Have you met Joe Black? Can you greet mystery wrapped in kind words?
Who has met Joe Black? Any and everyone at some point.
Have you seen Joe Black? You will on that final day.
Know where I can find him? Ask God.
Where is he from? Blackness and the depths of forever.

Come and meet Joe Black. He's waiting for you...



Illustrated by Zac Parkman

Eddie Burlough

By Garrett Ashley

Edward D. Burlough, quiet a good kid,
Eddie for short, if you don't mind a say so,
Lived with his aunt, Z. Grishefth of Plano
A vicious old hag, who'd turn him to mince,
If he didn't do those chores, squartha forling a pence.
Don't mind his language, if naughty you might,
Find this sort of rubbish, in this unkind plight
For it is well known, that though a good kid,
Burlough was born, of some mighty fine fid—
A group of odd noxlies, narst nartigans they'd say,
Fin Rumbled Old Darlings, dead to this day.
But with them he learned, unfortunate new rues,
Things today you'd hear ugly, niggles, damn rules.
This he'd then say, when Grishefth flew angry,
She hated his language, that hypocrite—hers wasn't so favvy!
Nixess! Filkreya! Daverr, and Bleek!
He could not yet spell them, though their names were quite sleek.
One word for each spasm his aunt then he'd make,
Quite a darling indeed, for hers, not his sake!
Where could she send him? Where shall coerce?
To school? The military? From there he'd learn worse!
Coerxiss! Fiddlebee, Slixser, and Fluae!
These are the words that put her on knees,
When chores there was called, to make him amend,
The things he had done, the words he had said.
It's too bad she didn't know what they meant,
Probably nothing, she knew, why then try to comprehend?
Edward's a good kid, to come from Fin Rumble,
The homeless old beggers, who stayed round to grumble.
Let him speak truths, with words we don't dare,
You'd just as well—they're harmless as air.

Bettie Page

By Kyla Cangemi

Angels fell far slower than notorious Bettie Page
Who so gently climbed the ladder and, trussed, fell in her stays
By the putting on of clothes and the changing of her ways

How easily the trap was sprung on locks of dark, dark hair
That fell around bluest blue eyes, in black, forbidding waves
Angels fell far slower than the notorious Bettie Page

Claws were simply your collar, a venomous rhinestone snare
Which kept your heart in check, your mind in a fanciful daze
By the putting on of clothes and the changing of your ways

Rosaries burned through negligees, down to skin soft and bare
Crushing perversions in black leather held so little sway
Angels fell far slower than the notorious Bettie Page

White collared man and a beautiful book, both full of care
You fell eagerly from the pews, not knowing what to say
By the putting on of clothes and the changing of your ways

Those clandestinely-taken photographs you would now tear
Because now the only thing to do on your knees was pray
Angels fell far slower than the notorious Bettie Page
By the putting on of clothes and the changing of her ways.

A Mother's Love

By Marian L. Brown

What she taught us in life,
Means more than words can say.
Leadership and love, expressed each day.
Loving and caring for all with determination.
Those are traits that stood out from all the rest.
Facing each day in a positive way.
Emotion, love, dedication, and devotion.
They are numerous and go on and on.
Sweet memories will forever linger.
A deep love abides within my soul.
You instilled within us, the love of God.
Made it perfectly clear, your love for all.
A passion for caring for others I've accepted.
There's a light that shines brightly from above.
Following in your footsteps—Thanks, Mom.

Forgiveness of Forever Forgotten

By Courtney Carter

In a place and a time where
I loved you
And you said I love you too died too early
Because the Forever Spring never came
The Love never came to Bloom
Instead it withered in the morning
Instead of budding Forever in Your Arms
And Forever Your Hand in Mine.
It stopped blooming
Love stopped blooming and growing and we never weeded
The Guilt, Mistake, Heartache, Unforgiveness--They rose up.
And choked Love
The thorns grew and stifled the flower
Mistakes grew and choked Love
And Forever Spring Never came
Forever Spring died in harsh Winter.

Untitled

By Wakitta Porter

The loud, painful, and cheerful noise,
Oh, I hate the joy of people
Why so cheerful, loud, and happy.

The gym was packed full of students,
Why everyone was excited remains a mystery.
Excited about our first pep rally,
I stood there in anger.

I thought why? All this joy and happiness,
I became mad by the hour.
I said everyone should be mad not happy.

I stood there alone in the darkness of my shadow,
Thoughts of anger, disappointment, and rage running through my mind.
How should anyone enjoy this?

I have had enough,
I ran out of the gym.
I realized, I was all alone for now and evermore.

No one to understand my hurt and my pain,
That day, I found it is my destiny.
To be, and forevermore a mystery.

Not to love or to hate,
To be myself and find my place.
Why do people misunderstand me?
I will never know why?
I am happy now and so should you be?

Sophomore Blues

By Darren White

I pass on the invitation
To grab the reins
When flowing through my veins
Is a lack of motivation.
No more elation
Daily pains
Monthly gains
Constant devastation.

Been going through the motions
Since I was five
Now hardly a notion
But a severe nosedive.
No more options.
Pray I survive.

Clinging Onto

By Corey Fauchaux

Here I am again walking alone down the street
Only the whistling of birds and the sound of my feet
I've got songs in my head with thoughts I can't complete
I watch my own footsteps, dodging cracks in concrete

Without meaning to, again, I walked to your house today
It's a good thing you weren't there, 'cause I'm not sure what I'd say
I rest on the swing where we sat every day
I reach for your hand so I'll know you're okay

I got up and wandered, though I still wanted to stay
I look up to your window, but I can't see you anyway
There were so many things that I just couldn't say
My biggest regret is that I saved it for another day

I can see it now, everything that's happening
People falling down, but I can't do anything
I want to go home—save this for some other day
If I could fix it, I would, but there isn't any way.

Here I am again walking alone down the street
Listening to music, my head bobs to the beat
I call up my friends without knowing what to say
It's probably best that no one answered anyway

I might've told them about what all I'd seen
The things that I've done, and things that I've been
And about other things that nobody believes
Like life without love and trees without leaves

You tell me your trials, and I share in your pain
I'll do it for you, friend, but it drives me insane
I look up at night and see the stars, moon, and planes
Lying on the ground, I feel the rumbling trains
I wanted to run, to go see what it's worth
But I'm here, frozen to the face of the Earth

Sparky, the Dragon

By Jessica Robin Aldridge

The way I see it:
Slumbering creature,
Guarding the castle,
Protecting his treasures,
Scales gleaming in the sun.

The way Mom sees it:
Snoring Dachshund,
Lazing in his dog house,
He and all his squeaky toys,
Fur matted with daytime sweat.

The way I see it:
Fierce predator awakens,
Letting loose a roar of flames,
Denying all passage across the moat,
Pretending to ignore the knight outside his castle.

The way Dad sees it:
Scruffy mutt wakes up,
Releasing a doggy yawn and belch,
Now staring mournfully at his spilt water dish,
Ignorant of the young boy just feet away.

The way I see it:
Knight bravely approaches the sharp-toothed beast,
Uncaring of the danger he risks,
To save the damsel in distress,
Before she becomes the dragon's lunch.

The way Sissy sees it:
Ridiculous boy covered in foil,
Carrying a cardboard sword,
Believes he's on a mission,
To recover a discarded Barbie doll.

The way I see it:

Knight sneaks into and out of the castle,
To the sound of a grumbling, rumbling dragon,
The princess has been saved,
No longer Sparky's lunch.

The way they see it:

Boy crawls over once again slumbering Dachshund,
Retrieves ancient, dog-mangled doll,
While Sparky snores unaware,
Until hearing the whoop of victory from the small boy.

